

Montana's Regional Innovation Grant (RIG)

SUMMARY CHARTER MEETING CORE LEADERSHIP GROUP

Missoula, Montana

Prepared for
Montana Department of Labor and Industry

August 22, 2008

INTRODUCTION

The core leadership group for Montana's Regional Innovation Grant (RIG) held their charter meeting in Missoula on Aug. 21, 2008. The following summarizes the group's observations and homework for the next meeting in Polson on Monday, Sept. 22, 2008.

What did core leadership members hear and learn at the training session with Maher and Maher, Innovative Leadership and EMSI that pertains to the tasks of Montana's Regional Innovation Grant:

- Identify regional vision and strategy to prosper and one that is broader than workforce training and development.
- "Somebody's got to do something and it is incredibly pathetic that it's got to be us" – The Grateful Dead
- As a region, we can increase our global competitiveness. We are too small as individual entities.
- Let's make it matter.
- Identify regional industry clusters and social network so we are nimble and flexible.
- Need a one-page end product to deliver to busy people in rest of world.
- Break down barriers and look for places where we can help each other.
- Plagiarize current best practices already out there.
- We need to be cognizant of work and efforts already done. Gather up regional plans such as Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDS) and bring collective information to the table. Start with the industries that have already been identified to reduce competition and redundancy.
- Use available information; don't re-gather information. Use CEDS as platform – don't restart process with the broad, raw data brought forth by EMSI. Overlay existing CEDS and update with contemporary information on CFAC and Stimson Lumber Co.
- CEDS didn't make a global look at how to connect assets in our communities and beyond our boundaries.
- We need to be innovative and get out of our comfort zone. Let's use the data but not necessarily how it has been used before. Let's be creative.
- Be open-minded about solutions. Make sure to not focus on one industry, e.g. timber industry, but to look broadly at what the data supports. Decisions need to be data driven.
- Be careful. A "good idea" may produce unintended consequences. For example, the state unemployment filing system and the Forest Service human resource system sounded good at one time, but both are failures.
- We have to get buy-in from people with lots of emotion (for example, multi-generation family businesses). When we find our leaders we need to be sure they have buy-in. Don't set them up for failure. Whatever we do we need to consider the culture. The heart and gut needs consideration. Do

- not violate culture and community while improving our region (facts and figures versus feelings).
- Economic development is about competition and we need a bigger team to be better.
 - The scenarios at the end of the game yesterday were eye opening. When people chose “grain and drain” it had the most social impact. When we work together and change viewpoints during the process that is the “aha”. We need to support the cultures of our small communities.
 - “What we can be best at” shouldn’t preclude maintaining our differences.
 - When a needs assessment was done for Ravalli County it said that the community college would be a unifying factor – NOT SO! What is the unifying factor in this region? We have mountains of trees. We have an opportunity to partner with federal agencies to manage forests. Identify unifying factors. Involve federal agencies in this process.
 - We had an opportunity yesterday to look at whether this regional definition makes sense. There are no Mineral or Sanders County representatives here today. There seems to be an urban county versus rural county competitive attitude. Do we want the seven counties? Is a region defined by geographic boundaries? Are there sub-regions? Need to be clear about the focus on timber industry. Focus on “lessons learned” from the timber industry.
 - Mineral County has a population of 4000 and limited ability to participate, but can do through trap lines.
 - I represent, but can’t speak for counties or the people who live there and who will be listened too.
 - Creative ideas are not stopped by boundaries.
 - Framework and starting point for grant was timber, but don’t know what will drive the focus. Need to look at data and make conscious decision to care about broad interests and industries to position ourselves for future.
 - Need clear-eyed view of timber industry. Be impartial and investigative and avoid falling into a pro- or anti-timber industry stance.
 - Don’t have any data on a restoration economy and need to look to other places for this information.
 - Montana State University has a Regional Manufacturing Center. We need to involve that data.
 - Unifying factors are important at the community level, not just the regional level, e.g. bringing together communities like Libby and Troy.
 - Acronyms across the region relating to economic development and the representatives involved is confusing and mind boggling to people. What are the major change factors of this Region? Our goals need to be truly achievable and facilitate change that helps support emerging industries. Regional needs may not mean current boundary lines. This is not an infrastructure as much as a “process.”
 - Think outside the box and not have pre-determined failure.
 - Futures game was fascinating. People who wanted to hang on desperately to what they had, lost it in the end.

- Agree timber industry is changing and need to make a broader view.
- This is large! Things have changed. We need to diversify. Let's change together. Utilize resources more wisely. Focus on joint interests to find creative solutions. In small conversations in our communities we can help move this forward.
- Western Montana is a Salish region and it's not difficult for us to think regionally. Let's put our hearts together and remain friendly and true to who we are. Focus on future generation and think about jobs not yet created. Hope daughters don't experience sexism and sons racism in future.
- Unintentional effects may happen, i.e. in Libby the company culture may be community-centered businesses that moves into corporation with interest in only the bottom line. We need to focus on the triple bottom line (environment, social, and economic) - maybe an emerging principle.

Missing skills, interests and abilities:

- Elected officials (state representatives, U.S. senate and representative offices, etc.)
- Corporate perspective (Washington Corp, Plum Creek, etc.)
- Tribe (officially)
- Business owners and Chambers
- Health occupations
- Real Estate
- Students
- Billionaires
- Federal government – Forest Service
- Foundations
- Agriculture
- Tourism
- Manufacturing
- Telecommunications
- Financial institutions
- Unions
- Professionals (such as lawyers, doctors)

Considerations for core group as we move forward:

- Aim for an uneven number between 30 and 35 members.
- Attempt to include all interests somehow (some members may wear multiple hats).
- Share information and communication links to promote buy-in.
- Consider evening meetings (or portion of meetings in evening) to involve some interests.
- Articulate realistic vision and outcomes.
- Website

NEXT MEETING

Monday, Sept. 22 from 9:00 to 5:00ish in Polson.

Meeting location to be announced. Lunch and mileage provided.

HOMEWORK for core group members

1. Communicate with your interest group and, if necessary, get buy-in with interest group. For example, tribe and superintendents.
2. Identify 7-10 people of varying perspectives and communicate with them about the RIG process. Be prepared to report what you heard and learned at the next meeting.
3. Read the meeting summary for the first four meetings held in July.
4. Send CEDS to Kay Strayer kstrayer@mt.gov for distribution.
Review CEDS and identify unifying factors and gaps and make short list of any questions.
5. Look at Workforce3one.org tutorial on implementing a Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development philosophy by going to <http://www.workforce3one.org/content/public/wired101.cfm>